

Public Abstract

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Title:Affective Instability and Impulsivity in Borderline Personality Disorder

Borderline personality disorder (BPD) is primarily characterized by frequent extreme mood shifts and self-damaging impulsive thoughts and behaviors, which cause an individual a great deal of distress in a variety of settings. This research examined the relationship between the personality traits of negative affectivity (i.e. the tendency to experience negative moods) and disinhibition (i.e. the tendency to exhibit impulsive thoughts and behaviors) and the symptoms of BPD in a sample of college undergraduates. Specifically, we examined the effect on an interaction between trait negative affectivity and trait disinhibition on the symptoms of BPD. Information was collected from participants via questionnaires and structured clinical interviews, first during participants' freshman year in college and again two years later. Results indicate that the interaction between trait negative affectivity and trait disinhibition is important in the expression of BPD symptoms, such that individuals with high levels of both personality traits were more likely to exhibit increased levels of BPD symptoms. This research represents the first examination of the relationship between the interaction of these personality traits and the expression of BPD symptoms. The results of this research are important for more fully understanding the development and expression of BPD, for accurately assessing and diagnosing BPD, and for designing effective treatments for BPD.